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Mahathir-Officers

ONLY CERTAIN GOVT OFFICERS ALLOWED TO BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE

GENTING HIGHLANDS, April 19 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will only consider allowing officers with no conflict of interest to take an active part in politics.

Officers with no conflict of interest could seek permission and it was up to the government whether or not to grant it, the prime minister told reporters after opening the National Premier Education Convention 2001 at Institut Aminuddin Baki, here.

He said this when asked to comment on the election of Bank Negara Assistant Governor (Operations and Investment) Datuk Dr Awang Adek Husin as deputy chairman of the Bachok Umno division in Kelantan.

The Umno special general assembly last November approved Article 6.3.4 of its constitution to allow Group A government officers to contest for and hold posts in the party.

However, under the General Orders, superscale officers and those in the Management and Professional Group are prohibited from taking an active part in political parties.

On the General Orders, Dr Mahathir said the government had no problem with it because there had been government officers who took up politics in the past.

"We do not give it (permission) at random to everyone because what happens if the division head is an office boy and he has to work under a DO (district officer)? It becomes a problem, there's conflict of interest, so (we) have to be careful...we have to consider properly," he said.

Asked about the Chinese school education system which is said to be better than that of the national schools, he said: "If there's a difference, it is based on the culture of the Chinese schools which is more attractive."

On Malay parents sending their children to religious schools, Dr Mahathir said the government had no problem with that as long as the religious lessons were taught properly.

He said what had happened was that there were parties who misused the religious schools by telling the students to spit at, step on and tear the pictures of certain leaders and saying that the government of the day was unIslamic.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said the ministry received periodic reports on developments in schools and any case of misconduct would be investigated and action taken if the report was found to have basis.

-- BERNAMA

MS RV JK